‘Playing in the Dark’ with Portuguese Statues in the United States of America: João Rodrigues Cabrilho, Peter Francisco, and Catarina de Bragança

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As I have shown in chapter two, “Scientific Racism and the Origins of Anti-Portuguese Stereotypes” of *Representations of the Portuguese in American Literature*, representations of the Portuguese in American fiction are clearly predicated on prevailing theories of race in America at those times. As Eric J. Sundquist has claimed in *To Wake the Nations: Race in the Making of American Literature*, this former slaveholding country is one where “race remains very much at the center of […] experience.” (Sundquist, 1993: 17). It was simply impossible for the Portuguese not to be viewed through the lens of racial theories. Race and racism, Toni Morrison reminds us in *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination,* are issues that literary critics have resisted addressing, as “silence and evasion have historically ruled literary discourse. Evasion has fostered another, substitute language in which the issues are encoded” (cf. Morrison, 1993: 9-10).[1]

Like Morrison, I also wish to “identify those moments when American literature was complicit in the fabrication of racism” (*ibid*.: 16). To achieve this goal one must, she rightly maintains, “avert the critical gaze from the racial object to the racial subject; from the described and imagined to the describers

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[1] This quote and the subsequent ones can be found in: Morrison, 1993: 9-10; 16; 90; 47; 63.

and imaginers; from the serving to the served" (*ibid*.: 90). Furthermore, Morrison insists that "Deep within the word 'American' is its association with race" (*ibid*.: 47) – and not just in the past: "Racism," Morrison further argues, "is as healthy today as it was during the Enlightenment" (*ibid*.: 63). I fully agree with her "that the metaphorical and metaphysical uses of race occupy definitive places in American literature, in the 'national' character, and ought to be a major concern of the literary scholarship that tries to know it" (*ibid*.: 63). My analysis of several texts in chapter 2 of this study indicates the extent to which Americans have been obsessed by skin color and that the darker complexion of Southern Europeans has produced anxiety and discomfort in Americans of Northern European stock.

As I will attempt to show in this essay, this rhetoric was also applied to the three historical figures represented by the statues evoking three major figures associated with American culture. To name, two that were actually erected on American soil (João Rodrigues Cabrilho in San Diego, California, and Peter Francisco in several Portuguese communities in the United States) and one that never made it to inauguration, Catarina de Bragança (Catherine of Braganza). The erection of these statues honoring Portuguese historical figures was mostly perceived as a means to counter patronizing attitudes towards Portuguese Americans or for motives associated with ethnic pride. In the case of the Cabrilho statue, it was perceived by some Portuguese Americans during and after the Civil Rights Movement as an attempt to seek redress for racism directed at this minority. During the Civil Rights movement historical accuracy was often overlooked because of the eagerness certain ethnic minorities evinced when wishing that their contributions be recognized by mainstream American society and culture. As for the statues honoring Francisco, these were also the result of Portuguese Americans being looked down upon with racist and xenophobic eyes by the mainstream WASP culture prior to these social transformations, and how they reacted and embraced this quasi-mythological and/or historical figure so as to be accepted and recognized as a worthy, industrious, and dignified ethnic group. As for the rejection of the statue meant to honor Catarina de Bragança, this substantiates the lingering paranoia on racial matters and how certain minorities – more specifically African Americans and Jewish Americans – are now subscribing to the payback ticket as a means to punish or erase cultural memory. In their inability to perceive history in context, certain ethnic minorities such as these are now resorting to reversed discrimination, somehow succumbing to similar practices – if not the sins – inscribed in the DNA of many of America's Founding Fathers.

If American literature was shaped by racial discourse, this study will endeavor to argue that it was also applied to art in general, that is, even statues such as the ones under review were "played" with because of the "darkness" evoked by these three historical figures. The history and stories associated with each one of them are also quintessentially American because if we take out race from American culture it is as if this culture completely disintegrates. Whether we like it or not, race is and will most likely remain, in essence, America's most common denominator when dealing with otherness.

Steinbeck and Cabrilho: Understanding an Unusual Match

In *The Image of the Azorean: Portrayals in Nineteenth and Early-Twentieth Century Writings*, Mary Theresa Silvia Vermette writes that the Portuguese in California were disgusted upon learning that John Steinbeck had immortalized this ethnic group as dirty and stupid in *Tortilla Flat* (1935). According to her, they responded immediately with the erection of a statue honoring João Rodrigues Cabrilho [Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo], the first European to visit the coast of California in 1542. With so much damage, perhaps the statue might be the means to uplift the image of this ethnic group. "The erection of a monument to Cabrilho," Vermette writes, was promulgated to remind others that the Portuguese had their own noble heritage and could claim their own heroes. This movement was supported by the Native Sons of the Golden West, who felt that, "To the leaders of the Portuguese colonies, the recognition of Cabrilho was a means of securing dignity for the Portuguese immigrant and a reminder to the immigrant of this dignity during his struggle of adjustment and integration." On December 19th, 1940, the statue of João Rodrigues Cabrilho was dedicated at picturesque San Diego Bay. During World War II, it was moved to Point Loma, where it stands above the site where Cabrilho landed in 1542.

Vermette then goes on to claim that

> There are those who feel that the statue was a response to the description of the Portuguese in John Steinbeck's *Tortilla Flat* as characterized in the person of Big Joe Portagee. Joe is a big, lazy, shiftless, lascivious lout, who is too stupid to be insulted by the demeaning treatment received from Pilon and his friends. Other allusions to the Portuguese, such as those about the women, are equally derogatory. It is no wonder that the Portuguese of California would want to refute this image, not only with Cabrilho's statue, but with week-long Cabrilho

> festival held every autumn. To their credit they have established a fine library at San Leandro. An impressive monument in honor of the Portuguese immigrant stands across the street from it. (Vermette, 1984: 122-123).

In my view, Vermette's argument needs to be reassessed. She is certainly right about Steinbeck's portrayal of Portuguese Americans in this work. However, although I agree with her questioning of Steinbeck's sensitivity to otherness in his portrayals of minorities, her assertion that the erection of Cabrilho's statue was in response to his negative portrayals of Portuguese immigrants in *Tortilla Flat* is incorrect and unconvincing. The aim of this section is to provide an understanding for this historical imprecision. As I elaborate on the fictional character of Big Joe Portagee so as to show my overall agreement with Vermette in what concerns Steinbeck's patronizing and ethnocentric attitudes, I also wish to distance myself from Vermette's unsubstantiated connection between Cabrilho's statue and Steinbeck's novel. My aim here is to shed some light on this issue and to argue that in 1935, when *Tortilla Flat* was published, a long journey down the path of ethnic awareness awaited the author. My contention is that during the period from the publication of *Tortilla Flat*, in 1935, to the release of *Viva Zapata!*, in 1952, Steinbeck's attitude toward ethnic minorities changed dramatically. As he traveled and became more exposed to otherness, his views on – and depictions of – ethnic minorities became less jaundiced and more realistic.

I concur with Vermette in her assessment of Augusto M. Vaz's chapter titled, "The Recognition of Cabrilho" where he states that the nineteenth-century was a "century obsessed with its own Anglo-Saxon superiority and success and one that borrowed, directly and indirectly, from the concept of Darwin; this was after all the period of Herbert Spencer and his Social Darwinism" (Vaz, 1965: 151-152). As I have argued in *Representations of the Portuguese in American Literature*, Steinbeck was shaped by this ideology, which we often associate with naturalist writings and writers (i.e. Frank Norris in *The Octopus* and Jack London in *The Valley of the Moon*). Donald Pizer has argued that "American literary naturalism…has been one of the most persistent and vital strains in American fiction" (Pizer, 1982: ix) and Steinbeck has made extensive use of it – even as late as 1939 when he published *The Grapes of Wrath*. While Vermette is correct in detecting an ethnocentric and patronizing attitude in *Tortilla Flat*, her source for this viewpoint – Vaz's *The Portuguese in California* – does not establish any connection between Cabrilho's statue and Steinbeck's novel. As a matter of fact, Steinbeck's name is never alluded to. It is Vermette who

states that "There are those who feel that the statue was a response to the description of the Portuguese in John Steinbeck's *Tortilla Flat*," without ever telling her readers who "those" really were (Vermette, 1984: 123).

As Leo Pap has shown, the Portuguese immigrants in America either had minimal instruction or were predominantly illiterate before and during the time period under consideration (cf. Pap, 1981: 79-81 and chapter 8). If any of these individuals had actually read Steinbeck's *Tortilla Flat*, the numbers were too insignificant to generate what Vermette sees as an immediate "response" by the "Portuguese of California" (1984: 123). Vermette's connection between the statue and Steinbeck's novel is, without a doubt, a reflection of the time period in which she wrote *The Image of the Azorean*,[2] the mid-1970s, a time when ethnic minorities were gaining a greater visibility and attention. Such rhetoric must be understood in the light of the social, cultural, and political changes prompted by the civil rights and feminist movements in America. While I am not the only one to state that this is an unreliable connection (cf. Almeida, 2003), it undeniably refers to a time in America when historical facts were, at times, overlooked because of the eagerness certain ethnic minorities evinced when wishing that their contributions be recognized by mainstream American society and culture. Such is the case under consideration. From a status of "invisibility" noted by M. Estellie Smith (Smith, 1974: 81) prior to, say, the middle of the twentieth-century, it is as if the Portuguese suddenly became visible. I will, therefore, unearth the historical background related to Cabrilho's biography as well as discuss why and when his statue was erected in San Diego. Briefly, I will also refer to postcolonial theory in my reading of Steinbeck's depiction of the Portuguese in *Tortilla Flat*, especially Big Joe Portagee.

The most notorious – and wildly celebrated – Portuguese contribution to the discovery of North America was made by João Rodrigues Cabrilho. Not much is known about his earlier life, education, and the reasons why he offered his services as a navigator to the Spanish crown. His nationality has also aroused speculation. In the chronicles of Antonio Herrera, specifically the *Decada Setima* of his *Historia General de los Hechos de los Castellanos* (a work most historians regard as reliable and trustworthy), the author writes that Cabrilho was born in Portugal, about the time Columbus made his first voyage to America. What we do know about Cabrilho is his role in the conquest of Central

[2] Originally a dissertation presented to the graduate board of the Department of Romance Languages and Literature at Harvard University, in April 1975 (cf. Vermette, 1984: 193).

America. At first under the leadership of Panfilo de Narváez, whose aim was to imprison the conqueror Hernando Cortez (Cortés), Narváez's troops were defeated near Vera Cruz. Afterwards, Cabrilho joined Cortez's troops. On July 2nd, 1520, Cabrilho, a commander in Cortez's army, participated in the battle of Otumba against the Aztecs. In December of 1523, Cabrilho took part in the conquest of Guatemala under Pedro de Alvarado, one of Cortez's commanders. After 1524 Cabrilho lived with his wife, Beatriz de Ortega, in the city of Santiago dos Cavaleiros of Guatemala. In 1536 he moved to the city of Gracias a Dios and was rewarded with land and money for his military assistance. His income from the cocoa grown on his lands was, at the time, considerable.

He participated in other expeditions organized by Pedro de Alvarado, but the one he is most renowned for is the one organized by Antonio de Mendoza, after Cortez's death, who sent this Portuguese navigator to discover the coast of California. The fleet was comprised of two ships, the *San Salvador* and the *Vitoria*, and it sailed away from Navidad, Mexico, on June 27th, 1542. Supposedly, its goal was to discover the Seven Cities of Cibola or the mythical strait of Anian, which was believed to connect the Atlantic with the Pacific Ocean. On September 28th, 1542, Cabrilho and a few other Portuguese navigators sailed into what is now the bay of San Diego and went ashore, thereby becoming the discoverers of California and the first Europeans to set foot on this part of the world. A few days later, and after having befriended a few Indians, they sailed further north on the coast of California. The crew was forced to return south due to the strong, gusty winds and the storms in the region. After a few additional hardships – ranging from peaceful or violent contacts with the natives – Cabrilho died and was buried on the island of San Miguel, on January 3rd, 1543. His death was caused by subsequent infections from a fall, during which he also broke an arm. One of his companions, Bartolomeu Ferrelo, reached the present northern limits of California on March 1st, 1543, and tried, in vain, to sail further north. The fleet returned to Navidad and arrived there on April 15th, 1543.[3] They had not found the passage between the Pacific and the Atlantic oceans but, instead, are credited for having discovered the entire coast of the future Golden State.

The Portuguese immigrants in California had always identified with Cabrilho's bravery and wished to erect a statue in his honor. While they

[3] For a full account of Cabrilho's life and expeditions, see Albuquerque, 1994, vol. 1: 154-155; Pap, 1981: 7-8; and the chapter on the role of the Portuguese navigators at the service of other countries, Peres, 1982: 147-54.

sought recognition from the American government – especially from the State of California – they also strove to dispel the widespread belief that Cabrilho was a Spaniard. To this end, F. Ross Holland Jr. notes that the Portuguese of California had, for a while, to compete with the Order of Panama. "The vision of the statue of the discoverer of the Pacific shore of the United States," notes Holland, "had been conjured up by a now defunct – but at one time quite fashionable – organization known as the Order of Panama." This group was "devoted to the encouragement and promotion of California's Spanish heritage" and it "flourished in the decade or so prior to World War I when American society was 'discovering' European nobility and traditions" (Holland, 1981: 1-5). They had planned to erect an "heroic statue…on that noble and commanding cape, Point Loma, which is the first land that Cabrillo sighted in the State of California" and it was to rise "a hundred and fifty feet tall from the ground" (*ibid*.: 1-5). Unfortunately, this statue was never erected since the organization "failed to act" (*ibid*.).

In the chapter titled, "The Recognition of Cabrilho" Vaz notes that as early as 1884, H. H. Bancroft had said, "To this bold mariner, the first to discover her coasts, if to anyone, California may with propriety erect a monument" (Vaz, 1965: 151). While the statue had to wait for better days, the first Cabrilho Festival was held on September 28 and 29, 1892 in San Diego. While this celebration was taking place, the Portuguese immigrants of California realized, for the first time, that "a monument should be set up to honor Cabrilho" (*ibid*.: 155). The reenactment of Cabrilho's landing on San Diego Bay, the crew's interaction with the natives, and an exhibition of Indian dances was taken up in 1894.[4] More than a century has elapsed and the Cabrilho Festival is still a major cultural event in San Diego, organized mostly by the local Portuguese Americans. It features dances, music, and cultural aspects of the other ethnic groups in the region, namely Spanish, Mexican, and Native American cultures.[5]

[4] Accounts of these celebrations are available in *A União Portugueza*, a newspaper published by and for the Portuguese communities in California (cf. [Anonymous], 1894). See also Holland, 1981: 1-2. For more background on the preparations for the Cabrilho Festival of 1892, see the minutes of the União Portugueza, 22 Sept. 1892, titled "Descoberta da Califórnia: As Festas em San Diego," a meeting held in Oakland, California.

[5] I would like to express my gratitude to Mr. Carlos Almeida, consultant and founder of the J. A. Freitas Library in San Leandro, California as well as Mr. José Maurício Lomelino Alves, immediate and past president of Cabrillo Festival, Inc., serving in the committee since 1974, for their support and generosity in sharing with me a considerable amount of materials without which this article would not have seen the light of day.

Holland notes that in 1926 President Calvin Coolidge issued a proclamation authorizing the Native Sons of the Golden West to erect a statue to honor Cabrilho, but they, too, "failed to show results" (1981: 5-6). Euclides Goulart da Costa, the Portuguese consul in San Francisco, did not let the dream of the Portuguese communities in California die out. During the 1928 Cabrilho Festival, he wrote that the monument honoring Cabrilho shall be the "Statue of Liberty of the West Coast" (*ibid.*: 14-15). While the erection of a statue honoring Cabrilho still had to wait for better days, in 1915 a bronze plaque was placed at Point Loma by the Cabrilho Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution. This was followed by another plaque on a monument inaugurated in 1935 on the same site.[6]

The statue of Cabrilho that now overlooks San Diego Bay – especially the background on how it got there – has a long and intriguing story behind it. Raising the necessary funds for this statue was not easy; without the assistance of the Portuguese government, it is unlikely that this project would have ever materialized. At the time, the fascist government[7] led by António de Oliveira Salazar was in a celebratory mood since Portugal would be celebrating eight centuries of history as an independent nation in 1940. While the official rhetoric centered on the celebration of Portuguese heroes, the erection of this statue must be understood within this political context. These celebrations would culminate in a major centennial exhibition in 1940 celebrating the nation's founding in 1140 and the restoration of its independence from Spain in 1640. These would be accompanied by the inauguration of important infrastructures, such as roads, schools, and other major public buildings across the nation.[8] The role of António Ferro, the régime's minister of information, was important not only in the scheduling of these events but also in erecting the Cabrilho statue in San Diego.[9]

[6] See Júdice, 1958: 96-97. For a more detailed account of this occurrence see [Anonymous], 1935; [Anonymous], 1935a.

[7] Some historians prefer to call the *Estado Novo* a right-wing dictatorship, which had begun on May 28, 1926, and lasted up to 1974. The democratic revolution of April 25, 1974 forced Marcello Caetano (Salazar's successor) to resign and flee to Brazil.

[8] See Andrade, 2001: especially chapter 3. I am grateful for my colleague's insight on this historical period and for his bibliographical suggestions.

[9] See Ferro, 1949. This separate publication is also available in Ferro, 1949a: 59-83. See also Ferro, 1938.

The two major events held in the United States influencing the cause of Cabrilho were the Exhibitions in New York and San Francisco in 1939. Ferro is reported to have visited California on July 3rd, 1939. As Margarida Acciaiuoli has noted, at the time the government of Portugal wished to strengthen its ties with the Portuguese communities in the United States. While it aimed at reminding Portuguese Americans of their heritage, it also aroused their pride for being the descendants of such remarkable navigators as, for example, Vasco da Gama, Fernão de Magalhães (Magellan), and Pedro Álvares Cabral. In addition to a variety of cultural artifacts on display at the Pavilions of Portugal in both world fairs, in the New York fair there was a replica of the Cabrilho statue by the sculptor Álvaro de Brée. In San Francisco, another copy of this statue was on display. It was a gift from Portugal to the state of California.[10] Once the exhibition was over, the original statue was sent to the Portuguese consul in San Francisco. For a while it was stored in a private garage. Before it was finally shipped to San Diego, a movement had been formed to have it erected in Oakland instead. In "The Case of the Kidnapped Statue", a chapter in the autobiography *Never Backward* (1972), Lawrence Oliver gives us an account of how the statue was taken to San Diego. It also includes his role in locating it and how he "kidnapped" it, so to speak, from Ana Lewis's garage.[11] The statue of Cabrilho was finally unveiled on September 28th, 1942, four hundred years after Cabrilho had landed on what is today Point Loma on the San Diego Bay.

Even though the erection of this statue was not motivated by Steinbeck's stereotyping of the fictional Portuguese Americans in *Tortilla Flat*, the truth is that they are looked down upon in this work. In addition, when reflecting on Steinbeck's portrayal of ethnic minorities in his fiction, I tend to agree that he was very much a man of his time. Whereas he may be seen as a champion of ethnic minorities in such works as *The Forgotten Village* (1941), *Cannery Row* (1945), and *Viva Zapata!*, the script for the 1952 movie by Elia Kazan, the same does not apply to the man who wrote *Tortilla Flat.* When reading this Steinbeck novel, I, like Toni Morrison, also wish to "identify those moments

[10] See Acciaiuoli, 1998: chapter 3. See also António Ferro's interview in the *Diário de Notícias* for additional information on Portugal's participation in both exhibitions (1938). More details on the San Francisco World Fair are available in Almeida, 2003: 106.

[11] For a detailed account of the entire episode see Oliver, 1972: chapter 17. A follow-up newspaper account of this episode was written by Stone, 1966. See also Vaz, 1965: 167-70 and Holland, 1981: 8.

when American literature was complicit in the fabrication of racism" (Morrison, 1993: 16). My contention is that in *Tortilla Flat* Steinbeck toyed with issues of race and ethnicity in his portrayals of the *paisanos* and Portuguese Americans. As a mainstream writer and – one must not forget – the one in control of the narrative, Steinbeck gazes at his ethnic fictional characters according to the rules and prejudices of his age, as William Boelhower and Edward Said have noted (cf. Boelhower, 1987: 86-87; Said, 1994: 95).

Big Joe Portagee is the Portuguese American fictional character in *Tortilla Flat* who supports my reading of John Steinbeck as a writer who left the imprint of racial stereotyping in this particular novel. Unmindful of issues centering on class, gender, and race, endless generations of scholars have overlooked Steinbeck's ethnocentric views. Such is not the case today.

Steinbeck, like most writers, was molded by the culture, prejudices, and conventions of his age, and there is simply no escaping these harsh realities. Steinbeck is no exception. This may help explain why he has immortalized Big Joe Portagee and Rosa Martin as filthy and sexually promiscuous. Moreover, they are the embodiment of practically all the negative stereotypes that American writers in general have attributed to the Portuguese. It is undeniable that in this novel Steinbeck creates a character who embodies practically all the traits most mainstream Americans abhor. In Big Joe Portagee we see no glimmer of industriousness, determination, and frugality. Instead, we make the acquaintance of a vagrant who prefers to remain locked up in prison as a burden for the taxpayers rather than work for his own livelihood. Big Joe Portagee is depicted as an anti-hero who prefers to be lazy rather than strive for military recognition. Moreover, he defies the military rules since he "didn't clean his rifle; he didn't shave; and once or twice, on leave, he didn't come back." "Of the two years in the army," we learn that Big Joe Portagee "spent eighteen months in jail", and that at the Monterey jail "only one charge was ever brought against him: Drunk and Disorderly Conduct." When the war was over, Big Joe "still had six months' sentence to serve." But the charge had now been, we learn, "Being drunk on duty. Striking a sergeant with a kerosene can. Denying his identity (he couldn't remember it, so he denied everything): Stealing two gallons of cooked beans. And going A.W.O.L. on the major's horse" (Steinbeck, 1983: 55-56).

As far as the issue of image creation in America is concerned, bell hooks contends that from "slavery on, white supremacists have recognized that control over images is central to the maintenance of any system of racial domination" (hooks, 1992: 2). Although America had undergone profound changes since

the days of slavery and even Reconstruction, one should not forget that Steinbeck, in the nineteen thirties, was living in the heyday of racial segregation, and ethnic minorities – especially Latinos, blacks, and Southern Europeans – were looked at with suspicion. Apart from being depicted as someone who enjoys the pit, Big Joe Portagee is also referred to as "this big black Portagee" (Steinbeck, 1983: 69). The issue of race and the overall darker complexion of the Portuguese compared to people from a Northern European background is apparent here. Clearly, Big Joe Portagee is the victim of something over which he has no control (cf. Silva, 2008: chapter 2).

Big Joe Portagee is also a type of character who recurs in Steinbeck's fiction. Steinbeck has an affection for the proletarian experience, often befriends the down-and-out, and wants to stick this acquaintance in the face of middle-class prigs. There is something which attracts him to these people. Perhaps it is their joy in living and their spontaneous, carefree ways. That is why he tends to romanticize the hookers, the hobos, and the social misfits. In his discussion of Big Joe Portagee, however, one is not sure if this really applies. If Steinbeck is so fond of the vagabond or hobo figure, why does he insist on including a reference to Big Joe's ethnic background in the character's very name? He does not do so with the other characters in *Tortilla Flat*. Why not let him simply be Big Joe? As a Portuguese critic, I believe the reference to the "Portagee" part in his name is certainly not an innocent one. Vamberto Freitas's contention that "The emergence of the word Portagee was not only due to the linguistic ignorance of Americans; it is a derogatory word, one that classifies the group as a whole" (Freitas, 1999: 170-71; my translation).[12]

Concerning the character of Big Joe Portagee, we can also apply what Homi Bhabha has pointed out in *The Location of Culture*: when in the presence of a mainstream, canonical writer, we often find the discourse and treatment one would normally expect in the colonizer's references to the colonized, oppressed people. In other words, a rhetoric centering on animalism, filth, and stereotyping – as Steinbeck makes use of in *Tortilla Flat* – is pretty much the same as the one a colonizer would use to justify his subjugation of the colonized.

Steinbeck was subject to the same prejudices as everybody else and – one should not forget – the product of a particular time and age. Yet despite Steinbeck's negative portrayal of minorities in *Tortilla Flat*, that does not

[12] «A palavra *Portagee* não nasceu só da ignorância linguística dos americanos; é um termo pejorativo e classificador do grupo.»

mean that Mexican and Portuguese American readers should cast their copies of this novel onto the pyre or act like Muslim communities throughout the world during the controversy involving Rushdie's *Satanic Verses*. The same narrow-mindedness could be said of Vermette, who was influenced by the discourse on ethnic awareness of the 1970s. Yet even though Cabrilho's statue was erected for different reasons from the ones propounded by Vermette, her argument concerning the patronizing attitudes toward Portuguese Americans in *Tortilla Flat* is valid. The irony, however, is that the "monument," so to speak, that Steinbeck has constructed with words in *Tortilla Flat* will likely last longer than the statue of Cabrilho. The novel will, therefore, stand for posterity as an emblem of intolerance toward ethnic minorities and a representative piece of fiction dealing with an uglier side of American culture. That is why Vermette's words will also remain valid, even if they clash with established views on Steinbeck's dealings with otherness.

From Obscurity to the Pantheon of Portuguese American Heroes: Recycling Peter Francisco for Ethnic Minority 'Feel Good' and Uplift

In a country such as the United States of America, where cultural demands pressurize most individuals into searching for a hero or emulating a role model, this attitude became more widespread with the changes spurred by the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s and greater ethnic awareness. In the particular instance of a few Portuguese communities, initially prompted by stories published in the *Diário de Notícias* newspaper of New Bedford, Massachusetts, in 1942, and the Portuguese Continental Union, they immediately considered recycling the figure of Peter Francisco, a man renowned for his herculean strength and stature, and a long forgotten hero who fought along with William Washington during the American Revolution in the early 1780s.

In this section, I aim at applying a theoretical framework on how historical figures evolve into myth or are mythologized so as to understand how specific ethnic minorities (the Portuguese in particular), who had been looked down upon with racist and xenophobic eyes by the mainstream WASP culture prior to these social transformations, reacted and embraced this quasi-mythological and/or historical figure so as to be accepted and recognized as a worthy, industrious, and dignified ethnic group. This will also entail delving into biographical issues so as to understand whether Peter Francisco had ever lived or if he is merely a legendary figure appropriated by those Portuguese Americans

desirous of recycling his alleged achievements and reputation for the purpose of experiencing ethnic pride. Or is such an effort worth lampooning given the uncertainties regarding his identity and background?

Like so many other historical figures such as Alexander or Joan of Arc, Peter Francisco is a bona fide example of a man who has risen to the pantheon of heroism since he is believed to embody the traits constituting a real hero: a strong moral character, physical and psychological resilience, fighting for a greater cause that may benefit his or her countrymen or even humanity. Through time, humans who have demonstrated such features are often mythologized. Peter Francisco, as we shall see, is no exception. When discussing Plato's views on mythology, Furio Jesi has noted the correlations between mythology and literature. A genre dealing with story-telling, its materials are, essentially, stories about the gods, heroes and trips to an afterlife (cf. Jesi, 1988: 14). For José María Mardones, all historical facts are imbued with mythical elements and, therefore, connected with them. In his view, myths use and transmit relevant historical facts. In other words, myths and history interact with each other. Moreover, at a certain level, the relationship between myths and history is further mediated by a third category – time (cf. Mardones, 2005: 55-57). In the example under review, Peter Francisco, a man of the eighteenth-century, was only elevated to the category of true Portuguese American hero after the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s or during the 1970s, a time marked by greater ethnic awareness. For a long time, his participation in the war for Independence and fighting alongside with William Washington was forgotten. It was only truly recognized almost two centuries later – when Portuguese American communities needed a hero whom they could look up to so as to counter former racial stereotyping and denigration as I have shown in my aforementioned study.

Heroes also embody that side of humanity which remains eternal and is praised by posterity. As Raymond Trousson has argued, whether it is the great figures of mythology, those from the Bible, from national traditions and even from history, without a doubt, these have been turned into myths in our culture – literary or philosophical myths (cf. Trousson, 1988: 38-39; 106-7). Whether it was Antigona, Alexander, Joan of Arc or even Peter Francisco, their bravery and the admiration they arouse have been turned into themes. These stories about individual grandeur have made their way into our days. They now represent symbolical, exemplary human features with a wider universal appeal. In the case of Antigona, this classical figure was recycled so as to explain certain occurrences in Europe during the First and Second World Wars (cf. *ibid.*: 106-107). By analogy, during the times of greater ethnic acceptance

of the 70s, Peter Francisco was also recycled. His bravery became an outlet for Portuguese Americans to remind America of a Portuguese man's contributions to the greatness of this nation. And this was during one of America's most taxing moments – a new nation attempting to secure its independence from a despotic oppressor. Much in the same way as the French had been inspired by the figure of Antigone during both World Wars, Portuguese Americans, too, saw in Peter Francisco an outlet for social and cultural criticism and a means to rebel against a predominantly WASP culture that had minimized or overlooked their contributions.

We are often unable to view these heroes as ordinary people, subject to the same demands of our own mundane world of chronology. Instead, we tend to mythologize them just as if they belong to a different realm compared to our own. Their fibre, calibre, and other qualities are not exactly the same as those of other mortal beings. Often, we are left wondering if they really existed since their good deeds performed for a given nation or even mankind are rendered in quasi-mythological or god-like terms. Sometimes, their accomplishments are similar to those we often encounter in fictionalized characters from a good piece of literature. This also applies to Peter Francisco since many scholars have pondered who he was, where he came from, and whether he had really existed. While searching for information on this man, we find several accounts of his life and military career sharing a common pattern but with some minor differences depending on the sources encountered. What have these scholars, then, unearthed regarding this man who was born around 1760 and passed away in 1831?

In June of 1765, at about five years of age, Peter Francisco was found by some dock workers, abandoned on a wharf in Hopewell, Virginia (a seaport then called City Point), and he was believed to have been Portuguese. In "Peter Francisco, Giant of the American Revolution," Donald N. Moran speculates that Francisco "was the son of an aristocratic Portuguese family that lived in the Canary Islands. The theory of his arrival in North America as a four year old boy is the result of his parents being involved in some political intrigue and who spirited him away to protect him." (Moran, [n.d.]: 1). Wearing what looked like expensive, aristocratic clothes, his shoe buckles were silver, each forming a letter – "P" and "F". Even if he could not utter a word in English, he seemed capable of communicating in what sounded like a mixture of Portuguese, French and Spanish. He was immediately taken to the Prince George County Poorhouse, but Judge Anthony Winston (Patrick Henry's uncle) later on decided to take personal charge of him. He took him to his farm near

New Stone in Buckingham County and it was there that Peter grew up. As a youth, he was instructed in the trade of blacksmithing. Winston never managed to learn more about the boy's past, but in 1971 Virginia researcher, John E. Manahan, managed to piece things together regarding Francisco's past while he was teaching abroad. In the article, "Peter Francisco: Remarkable American Revolutionary War Soldier," we learn that Manahan "argued convincingly that Francisco's original home had been at Porto Judeu, on Terceira Island in the Portuguese-held Azores, and that he was the same Pedro Francisco there on July 9th, 1760" (Manahan, [n.d.]: 2).[13] Why Francisco had been abducted still remains a mystery. Manahan speculates that the boy had been kidnapped by sailors who wanted to sell him in the New World as an indentured slave, but Manahan provided no explanation as to why he had been abandoned instead. According to an Azorean legend, the Francisco family had a few political enemies and fearing possible retaliation, they planned his abduction so as to protect him from reprisals. Possibly a true story, evidence is, nonetheless, lacking. But that Peter Francisco was a Portuguese (which he himself also suspected) seems almost certain, and Portuguese Americans have eagerly accepted him as an illustrious forebear.

In March 1775, when he was not yet fifteen, Francisco accompanied Judge Winston to Richmond for a meeting of the Virginia Convention. After a heated debate, the tempers flared as the delegates discussed the colony's relationship with England. Peter Francisco contributed to the excitement when he broke up a tavern fight by lifting the combatants into the air and banging them together until they stopped arguing. It was also during this convention that Francisco heard the renowned speech by Patrick Henry, in which he had said: "I know not what course others may take, but as for me, give me liberty or give me death!" Francisco was ready to take up arms, but the Judge advised him to wait longer.

When he was sixteen, Francisco fought in the Revolutionary War, in the Tenth Virginia Regiment. He served with distinction at the battles of Brandywine, Germantown, and Monmouth. While convalescing in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, he befriended the Marquis de Lafayette. At Lafayette's request, George Washington authorized the crafting of a special sword, measuring about five feet long. His strength, bravery, and size (perhaps six-feet-six-inches and 260 pounds) made him one of the most famous soldiers of the American

[13] George Monteiro notes that readers must keep in mind that Manahan's work is deeply flawed, especially his so-called research in the Azores (he actually quotes an "official" document that he says supports his findings, a document that says nothing of the kind).

Revolution. A popular story relates how he rescued a 1,100-pound cannon from the British soldiers at Camden by picking it up and carrying it off the battlefield on his back. Another story narrates the time when he was surrounded by nine Tory dragoons at Ward's Tavern in Amelia County. Despite being wounded and greatly outnumbered, Francisco managed to escape and steal the horses of his attackers. During the battle at Monmouth, New Jersey, a musket ball tore into his right thigh, leaving a wound that nagged him for the rest of his life. Francisco became the most remarkable fighter in the Revolutionary War, a giant of a soldier of whom General George Washington is reputed to have said: "Without him we would have lost two crucial battles, perhaps the War, and with it our freedom. He was truly a One-Man Army."

After the Revolution, Francisco operated a tavern, a general store, worked as a blacksmith, a planter, and was a wealthy country gentleman in Buckingham County. Through hard work, he became a rather wealthy man. Before marrying Susannah Anderson, Francisco sought the education he had earlier been denied. His desire to learn was as strong and inspiring as the stories of his daunting strength in the battlefield. He attended school with children and in just three years he was reading the classics. In 1819, Congress granted him a monthly pension. In 1825, he served as sergeant-at-arms of the Virginia House of Delegates for the last six years of his life. He and Susannah had a son and a daughter before she died in 1790. Catherine Brooke became Peter's second wife in 1794, and two years after her death in 1821 (they had three sons and one daughter) he married Mary Grymes West. The January 18th, 1831 issue of the *Richmond Enquirer* carried this eulogy "Died on Sunday in this city, after a lingering indisposition, Peter Francisco, Esq., the Sergeant-at-Arms of the House of Delegates and a Revolutionary soldier, celebrated for his undaunted courage and his brilliant feats." Apparently, he passed away from appendicitis. The governor attended the funeral at the State Capitol, and Francisco was buried with full military and Masonic honors in Shockoe Hill Cemetery in Richmond, Virginia. Although his fame was dimmed for a number of decades, he once was as well known as Davy Crockett or Daniel Boone. In the 1800s, schoolchildren became acquainted with his incredible adventures through a few novels focusing on this Hercules of the Revolution, and the Giant of Virginia.

On February 24th 1973, the Senate passed a resolution declaring March 15th to be Peter Francisco Day, observed in the state of Virginia and in several states with Portuguese communities. There are several monuments and parks named after this Revolutionary War hero. A park in the Ironbound section of Newark, New Jersey, where most of the population is Portuguese, was named for him.

The community also erected a monument to Francisco there. Peter Francisco Square, marked by a monument honoring his life and service, was named at the corner of Hill Street and Mill Street in New Bedford, Massachusetts, which has a large ethnic Portuguese community. The monument includes a Sons of the Revolution (SAR) medallion of honor. A monument in Greensboro, North Carolina has an engraving stating that Francisco was the "strongest man in the Revolutionary armies." There is also an original of a much-circulated engraving of Francisco housed in Independence hall in Philadelphia. It depicts Francisco's encounter with Tarleton's soldiers and it decorated several American homes for many decades. The Portuguese Continental Union of the United States gave out its first Peter Francisco Award in 1974. Also during the American bicentennial celebrations of 1975-76, the U. S. Postal Service issued a commemorative stamp in its "Contributors to the Cause" series honoring Francisco where he is seen saving the cannon at Camden.

One of the best older scholars on Portuguese American issues, Leo Pap, attests to Francisco's accomplishments but notes that Peter Francisco

> was a Portuguese only in a limited sense, having been raised almost entirely among Yankees. But there were still other men of more genuinely Portuguese background who swelled the fighting ranks of the young American republic. Some of these show up in the records of the War of 1812, in which the United States reasserted its independence from Britain. (1981: 16-17).

These men were three Portuguese soldiers (one of them was known as Portuguese Joe) who were commanded by Oliver Hazard Perry. Others, in Louisiana, had fought for Lafitte during the Battle of New Orleans against the British invasion of Louisiana (cf. *ibid.*: 16-17).

Possibly one of the most comprehensive pieces on Peter Francisco was written by George Monteiro in a chapter titled "Peter Francisco, Strongman" for a book to be published as a Tagus Press book by the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth/ University Press of New England as *Caldo Verde is Not Stone Soup: Essays on Portuguese Names, Proverbs, and Other Folk Materials*. Monteiro notes that the "facts" of Francisco's "life may be of folk provenience" (Monteiro, [n.d.]: 5).[14]

[14] Monteiro, "Peter Francisco, Strongman", in *Caldo Verde is Not Stone Soup: Essays on Portuguese Names, Proverbs, and Other Folk Materials*. To be published as a Tagus Press book by the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth/University Press of New England. Monteiro's chapter incorporates his original study (1963). This article appeared well before such subsequent work as Moran's and Manahan's derivative pieces.

Moreover, he had become a figure of popular lore whose "public honors paid him at his death had long been forgotten" and his fame "by the early 1840s diminished appreciably even within the confines of Virginia" (*ibid*.: 12). There was no monument, no tombstone or marker on his grave. Painstakingly, Monteiro goes on to provide a full account of the ways in which the memory and legacy of this giant of the American Revolution was preserved and passed on from one generation to the next.

The two pages Henry Howe devoted to Francisco in *Historical Collections of Virginia* (1845), notes Monteiro, "provided the basis and set the tone for most of the subsequent historical treatments of Francisco in the nineteenth--century." And in each of Howe's works, Monteiro further adds, there was an "indiscriminate mixture of history, folk tradition, and popular lore" which "renders the full historical claims of his collection highly suspect" ([n.d]: 13-14). The circulation of several anecdotes further questioned Francisco's reputation and his family tried to turn these into footnotes. In 1893, Miss N. B. Winston, a great-granddaughter of Francisco prepared a thirty page monograph entitled *Peter Francisco, Soldier of the Revolution* stressing relevant details of his military career. Influenced by Miss Winston's accounts, the editors of the *William and Mary Quarterly* attempted to make amends for the neglect of this Virginia patriot and printed a few documents on Francisco. In 1929, Mrs. Nannie Francisco Porter and Miss Catherine Fauntleroy Albertson published *The Romantic Record of Peter Francisco*. It is, notes Monteiro, "the most ambitious biography to date" and it "makes generous reference to authorities and sources, but unfortunately its authors provide neither documentation nor quotations nor a bibliography" ([n.d.]: 15). There was not much both authors could do with such insufficient materials for their "romantic record" except trace the metamorphosis of the "boy of brute strength into a socially adept, well-mannered member of Virginia society" ([n.d.]: 16). In 1936, the case of Peter Francisco was brought to the attention of the members of another national group, the Elks. Three years later, the *Coronet* magazine included a brief sketch of Francisco. A few months after the Pearl Harbor bombardment coupled with the American Legion's interest in the private soldier, Francisco becomes a symbol for America's private or unknown soldier.

Through time, the flame of Francisco's reputation was kept alive. An essay published in the *Virginia Cavalcade* complained of the treatment accorded Francisco by American writers. In 1957, the *Saturday Evening Post*'s 300 word note reasserted Francisco's growing fame within the United States. Shifting from history to legend, Fred J. Cook's essay, "Francisco the

Incredible" oscillates between folk motifs and historical accuracy but somehow undermines the author's interest in biography and history. When reviewing Cook's book, *What Manner of Men*, the historian Richard B. Morris highlights Francisco's bravery, comparing him to a 'Paul Bunyan of the South,' and suggests that the "patriot's friends owe him a scrupulous biography" (cf. Monteiro, [n.d.]: 19-20).

Without a doubt, the most passionately committed supporters of Peter Francisco have been the Portuguese Americans, especially those originally from the Azores. They had learned about Francisco thanks to the Malone's *American Legion* article, especially when it was brought to the attention of the editors of the *Diário de Notícias*. They did not view Francisco as a legendary figure; instead, they were keenly convinced he was a native of Portugal. The stories published in the *Diário de Notícias* newspaper of New Bedford, Massachusetts, in 1942, along with the Portuguese Continental Union's efforts triggered an immediate admiration towards him and an unquestioning embrace of this warrior. Keeping in tune with the Portuguese ideology of the time, these stories suggested that it was the moral duty of the 'luso-american' communities to enhance the name of this great exponent of the virtues of the Portuguese race, beliefs which were clearly endorsed by Salazar and broadcast in the Portuguese diaspora.

Looking back so many centuries into the past, any ordinary citizen cannot help but wonder if such historical heroes such as Alexander, Joan of Arc or even Peter Francisco had really existed. During the process of glorifying and mythologizing them, that is, assigning a quasi-divine status to them, we often find ourselves asking the following questions: Were they actually real flesh and bone people or are their heroic accomplishments materials we often encounter in mythology books? After having attempted to fathom this hero of the Revolutionary war, Monteiro asks the following question: Did Francisco ever really exist? "The place and date of Peter Francisco's birth and early childhood" notes Monteiro, "have never been definitively established" ([n.d.]: 25). Did he exhibit such prowess and was his sword over-sized as legend has it? Was Peter Francisco the "menino do Freixo," a "Peter of Portugal" who lifted heavy weights and a great eater or was he, instead, born in Porto Judeu, on the island of Terceira? "It is not hard to see how 'Peter', 'Portugal' and 'Freixo'," notes Monteiro, "arriving by ship, putatively, from somewhere or other became 'Peter' from 'Portugal,' and a modified 'Freixo' turned – not entirely implausibly – into a 'Francisco'. So, in terms of legend it can be argued that 'Peter Francisco' is Portuguese after all. As for the biographical or historical Peter Francisco that's another matter altogether" ([n.d.]: 27).

Another important voice who has added more fuel to this issue was Onésimo Teotónio Almeida in *Ah! Mònim dum Coriso!..* (Cf. Onésimo Almeida, 1998). This work contains a series of sketches focusing on the immigrant experience in the United States, more specifically in *LUSAlândia*, a word coined by Almeida. Among several issues related to the Portuguese communities – and the one that really matters for the issue under review – is his satirizing or lampooning Francis Rogers's book, *Americans of Portuguese Descent: A Lesson in Differentiation* (1974) so as to discredit the author's eagerness to attribute Portuguese ancestry to Peter Francisco, a hero of the American Revolution, when very little was known about his past and country of origin. In this sketch, Almeida aims at criticizing the urge evinced by certain ethnic minorities in the 1970s – in this case Portuguese Americans – during a time marked by the emergence of multiculturalism and the need to find Portuguese heroes in American history for the purpose of ethnic uplift and 'feel good'. In addition, Almeida also ridicules the committee conferring the Peter Francisco Award. But in a country such as the United States of America where the dominant WASP culture has traditionally stereotyped and denigrated this ethnic minority – and many others – it is quite understandable that Portuguese Americans eagerly embraced the figure of Peter Francisco. As I have shown in *Representations of the Portuguese in American Literature*, *Portuguese American Literature*, and in the article "Steinbeck and Cabrilho: Understanding an Unusual Match with the Help of Ethnicity and Postcolonial Discourse," the Portuguese reacted much in the same way with the erection of a statue to João Rodrigues Cabrilho in Point Loma, San Diego, California because they were disgusted with the stereotypical, racist portrayal of Big Joe Portagee in John Steinbeck's novel, *Tortilla Flat* (1935) – as I have noted earlier.

During the process of recycling myths from the past, what is actually fascinating about this matter is to ascertain the ways in which certain historical figures are either temporarily forgotten, later on resurrected and, eventually, manipulated for the purpose of fulfilling a particular political agenda. In a country such as the United States, where everyone is said to "need a hero," Portuguese Americans eagerly looked to Peter Francisco, unmindful if he had really existed or if he was just another legend, just another ghost coming out of mythology story books children and teenagers often enjoy reading during their free time.

No Statue for Catarina de Bragança: A Victim of Current Racial Paranoia and other Allegations as Slave-trader and Persecutor of Jews?

Catarina de Bragança [Catherine of Braganza] was born on November 25th, 1638 and passed away on December 31st, 1705. She was a Portuguese princess and the queen consort of Charles II of England, Scotland, and Ireland. They were married to each other in 1662. At the outset of her tenure as queen consort, she was not very popular with British citizens due to her Catholicism and her inability to speak the English language. The port cities of Tangier (Morocco) and Bombay (India) were presented to the English crown as part of her dowry. The latter, Mumbai, as it is now known, had a long-lasting influence on the development of the British Empire. It would evolve from a town of about 10,000 inhabitants while under Portuguese rule into a major commercial hub.

A barren queen, the throne was passed down to Charles' brother James, Duke of York. Her husband, however, was a womanizer and kept many mistresses with whom he fathered several illegitimate children which he eventually acknowledged. Although she had been proposed as a bride for John of Austria, François de Vendôme, duc de Beaufort, and Louis XIV her marriage to Charles II was seen as a means to strengthen the secular alliance between Portugal and England, after the Treaty of the Pyrenees in 1659 in which Portugal had been abandoned by France. Catarina was married by proxy in Lisbon on April 23rd, 1662, but upon her arrival in Portsmouth on May 14th, 1662, the couple were married in two ceremonies. The Catholic one was private and conducted in secret whereas the public, Anglican service was held on May 21st at what is now the Royal Garrison Church at Portsmouth. At the time, she was 23. Her inability to conceive a child put her in a very difficult position even if her husband was very understanding, insisting that she be treated with respect, and siding with her over his mistresses. On occasion, Charles also felt the pressure from Parliament, urging him to seek a divorce to beget or come up with a Protestant successor.

Nor was Catherine's life in England anywhere easy, either. Known for keeping her religious beliefs a private matter and receiving the support of her understanding husband, she was often the target of anti-Catholic sentiment. In November of 1678, she was accused by Titus Oates, an instigator of the "Popish Plot," of being involved in a conspiracy to poison Charles II. The king, however, discredited such allegations and stood by her. Charles II succumbed to a final illness in 1685 and his brother, James II, succeeded him to the throne. After his deposition in the Glorious Revolution, William III

and Mary II were enthroned. Catherine remained in England during these periods of political transition. What initially looked like being on good terms with the anointed monarchs, Catherine's position gradually deteriorated. Her Catholicism led to greater misunderstandings and increasing isolation. Told not to question Parliament's decision in curtailing her Catholic servants, tired of being ostracized, Catherine returned to Portugal in March 1692.

Catherine supported the Treaty of Methuen in 1703 with England and acted as regent for her brother, Peter II, in 1701 and 1704-5. She died at the Bemposta Palace in Lisbon on December 31st, 1705 and was buried at the Jerónimos Monastery in Lisbon.

Although she had been treated as a *persona non grata* in England, her cultural legacy was relevant since she is credited for having introduced tea, the fork, and orange marmalade to the dining tables of England. Although some historians have claimed that Queens, a borough of New York City, was named after Catherine of Braganza, others point out that her name is not mentioned in the first 200 years of historical records housed in the county's archives. She was, nonetheless, queen when Queens County was established, alongside Kings County (Brooklyn) in 1683, with Kings County being named for her husband.

The efforts to erect a ten meter (35-foot) statue in her honor were abandoned once local African American, Irish American, and other communities vociferously denounced allegations of Catherine of Braganza and her family of having profited from the slave trade and for persecuting Jews. Instead of being erected on the waterfront at Hunters Point, across the East River from the United Nations, a smaller replica now stands at the site of the Expo'98, in Lisbon, by the Tagus River, facing Queens across the Atlantic.

It is quite intriguing to realize that this queen, who had introduced refinement and cosmopolitanism in England, would become such a controversial figure for the reasons outlined earlier and yet radically change social mores and etiquette in England. Across the Atlantic, in contemporary America, her alleged complicity with the slave trade and the persecution of Jews and the current paranoia over the sins of the past were more than sufficient grounds to cast her into the dustbin of American history. Which European colonizing nation in the seventeenth-century could actually cast the first stone? What follows is a brief synopsis of the current racial hysteria plaguing several American minds and their inability to look at history in perspective. That is, their incapacity to acknowledge that the past had, without a doubt, tolerated horrifying and evil practices but that through the centuries mankind has slowly atoned for

them through various means. These would include, for example, human rationalism and the Enlightenment, allocating greater financial resources for minorities and the betterment of their educational and career opportunities – just to name a few. Moreover, in the United States, the civil rights, feminism, and multiculturalism/ethnic awareness movements of the sixties and seventies are a case in point. Let us, then, revisit some of these arguments so as to ascertain how this princess, the epitome of aristocratic refinement, ironically evolved into a sort of whipping-boy, a playmate with whom America could "play" with "in the dark."

In an article titled "Catherine of Braganza: The Fall of a Queen," by Aaron Rutkoff and Nick Abadjian, we learn that the idea was kicked off by the leaders of the City's Portuguese Trade Commission and that they had "published a biography of Catherine in conjunction with an exhibition celebrating her 300th anniversary at the Queens Museum of Art and then founded the Friends of Queen Catherine, headed by Manuel Sousa, to promote her identity" (Rutkoff / Abadjian, [n.d.]. They also chose the internationally renowned sculptor, Audrey Flack, who worked on this project at her foundry, located in upstate Beacon, New York. Her design of the "35-foot high statue showed the Queen with an orb in her hand, symbolizing her role in bridging the new and old worlds." Sousa later noted that Government and banking interests in Portugal so far had contributed about $350,000 to the one million sculpture.

Nadine Brozan's article, "Here's to Queen Catherine, Who Gave Queens a Name" (1990), sheds further light, especially on Claire Schulman, the borough's President at the time, and how she was dragged into this episode. From early excitement with the project, her liaison with Portuguese authorities in the United States and in Portugal, to her final rejection of the project are issues that this article unearths quite well. Shulman had "learned about the Queen… through an exhibition in the Queens Museum honoring Catherine's 350th birthday in 1988 and through a trip to Portugal in May 1989" (Brozan, 1990). On a certain "Tuesday evening at a benefit put on in the Plaza Hotel by the Friends of Queen Catherine," Shulman, we learn, "was inducted into the Order of Vila Viçosa." And this award, we are told, "was originated by King John IV, Catherine's father, and was presented to Mrs. Shulman by Dom Duarte, the 42-year-old Duke of Braganza, who would be King of Portugal if Portugal were still a monarchy."

With the passing of the years, earlier enthusiasm over this project soured to the point that in 1998, most Queens' residents asked themselves if Catherine really deserved such prominence there. In the opinion section of *The Curator's*

Eye, an anonymous article titled "The Wrong Place for Queen Catherine" tells us that the opponents of this statue comprised "a diverse group led by blacks in Queens," who believed that Catherine is "disqualified by her association, however tangential, with slavery" ([Anonymous], 1998). These activists go on to ask

> Why award a prominent spot on New York's waterfront to a large memorial, one-third the height of the Statue of Liberty, to a monarch who is really a footnote in borough history and the history of this democracy? Catherine herself, though a figure of prominence in Portugal's struggle to remain independent of Spain, and a Catholic who championed the interests of English Catholics during a time of great religious strife, played no role in the settlement of Queens. (*Ibid.*).

In addition, in an opinion letter written by David L. Gold, "The Way New York Tawks; Queens, It Appears, Has Slim Tie to Catherine," Gold further rejects the statue because it would clash with what America as an independent nation had fought for – the rejection of a British despotic aristocrat called George III. "Promoters of the statue," he claims, "seem to have forgotten the American Revolution. Erecting a statue of a British queen would be negating everything the American revolutionaries believed in and fought for" (1998). He further adds that when Catherine was

> regent of Portugal, she, like other members of her family who sat on the Portuguese throne before and after, countenanced the murder of Jews for the simple reason that they were Jews. For example, on Sept. 6, 1704, 60 people were burned alive in Lisbon after "confessing" to the "crime" of being Jews. All told, about 1,200 Jews were burned alive in Portugal when Catherine and her relatives ruled the country and thousands more put to death in other ways merely for that "crime." (Gold, 1998).

In "The Queen of Ethnic Nightmares; Cultural Politics Mires Statue of Borough's Namesake" (1998), Barry Bearak eloquently puts his finger on the racial paranoia that often obfuscates contemporary American society. When faced with constituents' pressure and, possibly, reelection interests, Shulman could not resist such arguments as those put forth by, for example, Betty Dopson, who claimed that the statue's "hands are bloody with the murder of millions of Africans." One of the most vocal leaders in this group, Dopson went on to ask: "Do we really need a statue of a slave mistress? To erect this

monstrosity shows disrespect to every African-American whose ancestors were raped and shackled and shipped off" (*ibid.*). Corralled, Schulman eventually agreed with critics who say "guilt by association is guilt enough." "Decent people are offended and that troubles me", she is reported to have said, and "I don't think of Catherine of Braganza as necessarily evil" (*ibid.*), but the queen cannot deny she did not live in a slave-trading nation, "in an age that was terrible to a portion of the world". Tired of losing a lot of sleep on this controversial issue and understanding both sides of the argument pro and against the statue, Schulman asks: "Would you want to play King Solomon? Do you have a solution?" (*ibid.*). Although it is nowhere stated in the research encountered on this controversy, one cannot help but wonder what she means when asking this rhetorical question in which she imagines herself playing a similar role as King Solomon. In the end, did her Jewish background eventually condition her final decision? After all, she had also heard about the complicity of the Braganzas with the persecution of Jews and this is a very sensitive issue to anyone with this ethnic background. The author of this article makes a fine x-ray of contemporary America when showing that Ms. Shulman's "compromise" really satisfied no one. In his view,

> Opponents do not want it to go up anywhere in America, on public land or private. Their quarrel with Catherine is similar to dozens of other battles over racial symbolism across the country. Last October, a majority-black school board in New Orleans renamed George Washington Elementary School because America's first president had been a slaveholder. Patrons of the statue, on the other hand, say finding an equivalent site will be impossible. (*ibid.*).

Instead of erecting a statue, notes E. E. Lippincott in "Neighborhood Report: Long Island City; A Museum of Tolerance Suggested for Statue Site" a museum of tolerance is clearly a preferable option (cf. 2001).

The controversies over the erection or rejection of these statues are predicated on theories of race in America and even this last example shows that in times of greater racial tolerance the sins of the past cannot be easily erased. As Toni Morrison and Eric Sundquist would have certainly argued, were scholars to take out race from their debates on American culture it is not altogether certain such a culture would sustain itself. Whether we like it or not, race continues to be one of its sustaining pillars and an issue that time and again comes back to haunt us even if we have tried to move beyond such a discourse with multiculturalism, postcolonialism, and ethnic studies.

These three statues – and most especially the last one – are clearly bona fide examples of how America still loves to "play in the dark" even if we keep on reminding ourselves that racial segregation in the United States was dismantled in the 1960s.

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RESUMO: Representations of the Portuguese in American literature are clearly predicated on prevailing theories of race in America. As Eric Sundquist has claimed in *To Wake the Nations*, this former slaveholding country is one where "race remains very much at the center of […] experience." Race and racism, Toni Morrison reminds us in *Playing in the Dark*, are issues that literary critics have resisted addressing, as "silence and evasion have historically ruled literary discourse." Like Morrison, I also wish to "identify those moments when American literature was complicit in the fabrication of racism." "Racism," Morrison argues, "is as healthy today as it was during the Enlightenment." It is now widely accepted that Americans have been obsessed by skin color and that the darker complexion of Southern Europeans has produced anxiety and discomfort in Americans of Northern European stock. This rhetoric was also applied to the three historical figures represented by the statues evoking three major figures associated with American culture. To name, two that were actually erected on American soil (João Rodrigues Cabrilho in San Diego, California, and Peter Francisco in several Portuguese communities in the United States) and one that never made it to inauguration, Catarina de Bragança. The erection of these statues honoring Portuguese historical figures was mostly perceived as a means to counter patronizing attitudes towards Portuguese Americans or for motives associated with ethnic pride, racism, and recognition. If American literature was shaped by racial discourse, this paper will argue that it was also applied to art in general, that is, even statues such as these were "played" with because of the "darkness" evoked by these three historical figures.

ABSTRACT: As imagens de portugueses na literatura norte-americana estão baseadas nas teorias de raça predominantes nos Estados Unidos da América. Outrora um país esclavagista, Eric Sundquist defendeu em *To Wake the Nations* que ainda hoje as «questões raciais continuam a ocupar um lugar de destaque» no dia-a-dia deste país. As questões raciais e o racismo, recorda-nos Toni Morrison na sua obra, *Playing in the Dark*, são assuntos que os críticos literários evitaram abordar porque, numa perspectiva histórica, o «silêncio e a evasão têm dominado o discurso literário». Tal como Morrison, nós também gostaríamos de «identificar esses momentos em que a literatura norte-americana foi cúmplice no fabrico

do racismo». «O racismo», argumenta Morrison, «está tão saudável hoje como durante o Iluminismo». Hoje em dia, é usualmente aceite que os americanos têm sido obcecados pela cor da pele e que a tez mais escura dos povos do sul da Europa tem despertado ansiedade e uma sensação de desconforto nos americanos cuja origem provém dos povos da Europa do norte. Esta retórica também foi aplicada às três figuras históricas representadas pelas estátuas que evocam três figuras associadas à cultura norte-americana. A saber: duas que foram efectivamente erigidas em solo americano (João Rodrigues Cabrilho, em São Diego, na Califórnia, e a de Peter Francisco, em várias comunidades portuguesas nos Estados Unidos) e uma outra, que nunca chegou a ser inaugurada, a Catarina de Bragança. Com o intuito de dignificar estas figuras históricas portuguesas, o erguer destas estátuas era visto como uma tentativa de contrariar as atitudes de condescendência para com os luso-americanos, ou por outros motivos, tais como o orgulho étnico, o racismo e o reconhecimento. Se a literatura norte-americana foi, efectivamente, moldada por esse discurso racial, o presente ensaio pretende demonstrar que esta retórica também foi aplicada à arte em geral, designadamente às estátuas em apreço daquelas figuras históricas.